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Message Text

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14
ORIGIN AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04

RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 SPC-03 AID-20 AGR-20 L-03 H-03

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

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E.O. 11652: N/A
AGS: PFOR EAID ET
SUBJECT: POST EDITORIAL ON ETHIOPIAN FOOD AID

1. THE FOLLOWING EDITORIAL ENTITLED FOOD AID TO ETHIOPIA:
A CASE HISTORY APPEARED IN THE WASHINGTON POST JANUARY 7:

2. THE CASE OF ETHIOPIA, WHICH IS EXPORTING GRAIN FOR CASH
WHILE IMPORTING FOOD FOR FREE TO RELIEVE ITS HUNGRY POOR,
CANNOT FAIL TO DISHEARTEN ANYONE CONCERNED WITH THE TIGHTEN-
ING WORLD FOOD SITUATION. AS FAR AS OUTSIDERS KNEW,
ETHIOPIA WAS STRUCK LAST YEAR BY A TERRIBLE DROUGHT WHICH
UPROOTED A MILLION OR MORE PEASANTS IN TWO PROVINCES AND
LEFT AN ESTIMATED 50,000 TO 100,000 DEAD. IT SEEMED TYPI-
CAL OF THE GROWING NUMBER OF COUNTRIES WHOSE WHOLE DEVELOP-
MENT IS JEOPARDIZED BY INADEQUACIES ON THE BASIC FRONT OF
FOOD. THESE NATIONS LIVE ON THE RAGGED EDGE OF THE WEATHER:
A GOOD SEASON BARELY LETS THEM STAY EVEN, A BAD SEASON CAN
PUSH THEM OVER. IT IS PRECISELY BECAUSE OF THE SEEMING
PREDICAMENT OF COUNTRIES LIKE ETHIOPIA THAT THE INTER-
NATIONAL COMMUNITY IS STARTING, BEGRUDGINGLY, TO EXPLORE
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NEW WAYS TO COPE WITH THE FEEDING AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE

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WORLD'S POOR.

3. WE SAY THE "SEEMING" PREDICAMENT OF ETHIOPIA WITH A PURPOSE. FOR IT TURNS OUT THAT IT IS SIMPLISTIC, IF NOT DOWNRIGHT WRONG, TO ATTRIBUTE ITS RECENT MISERIES TO DROUGHT. THE RESPONSIBILITY, OR A GOOD PORTION OF IT, HAD MUCH BETTER BE FIXED ON THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP. IN BRIEF, ETHIOPIA'S POLITICAL SYSTEM HAS NOT PROVIDED IT WITH THE CUSHION TO ABSORB THE ADMITTEDLY HEAVY BLOWS OF NATURE WHICH THE COUNTRY IS BOUND TO SUFFER. EVEN A QUICK GLANCE AT THE POLITICAL SYSTEM CONVEYS AN IMPRESSION OF WHAT IT HAS FAILED TO DO. PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS IN THE DROUGHT ZONE, FOR INSTANCE, APPARENTLY FIGURED THAT OFFICIALS AT THE CENTER DID NOT WISH TO BE DISTURBED BY THE BAD NEWS. MONTHS LATER, ONCE THE NEWS DID GET THROUGH, THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT WAS STILL RELUCTANT TO ADVERTISE THE PROBLEM BY SEEKING INTERNATIONAL AID. NOR DID IT CHOOSE TO TREAT THE PROBLEM ITSELF, TO THE DEGREE IT MIGHT HAVE, BY DIVERTING GRAIN INTENDED FOR COMMERCIAL EXPORT. TO LOCAL PROTESTS ABOUT ITS ATTITUDE TOWARD ITS OWN STARVING CITIZENS, THE GOVERNMENT SEEMS TO HAVE RESPONDED WITH EXTREME STIFFNESS, SOMETIMES WITH GUNFIRE.

4. IN ETHIOPIA, THE GOVERNMENT APPEARS TO HAVE DISTRIBUTED A GREAT DEAL OF LAND TO POLITICAL FAVORITES IN RETURN FOR THEIR LOYALTY. PEASANTS HAVE SMALL CHANCE TO OWN THEIR OWN LAND AND MAKE A DECENT LIVING ON IT. THE ETHIOPIAN PARLIAMENT, WHICH IS HEAVY WITH BIG LANDOWNERS, HAVE BEEN DISCUSSING LAND REFORM FOR YEARS WITHOUT EFFECTIVE RESULTS. EMERGENCIES SUCH AS LOCAL DROUGHTS MERELY GIVE BIG LANDOWNERS A BETTER CHANCE TO BUY POOR SMALLHOLDERS OUT AT FIRE-SALE TERMS. THAT IS TO SAY, WHAT SEEMS AT FIRST GLANCE TO BE A PROBLEM OF PRODUCTION AGGRAVATED BY BAD WEATHER IS AT THE SAME TIME, PERHAPS TO A LARGER EXTENT A PROBLEM OF POLITICS AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AS WELL.

5. ETHIOPIA'S POLICY POSES A GENUINE DILEMMA FOR OUTSIDERS MOVED BY THE SPECTACLE OF HUMAN SUFFERING. WHY AND HOW SHOULD OUTSIDERS CARE FOR PEOPLE LEFT IN THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LURCH BY THEIR OWN GOVERNMENT? IN THE CURRENT SITUATION, A FOREIGN CHURCH GROUP LED BY AN IRISH PRIEST HAS PROVIDED MORE RELIEF, ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, THAN HAS THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH, WHICH IS SAID TO OWN 20 PER CENT OF THE ARABLE LAND. SEN. EDWARD KENNEDY (D-MASS.) UNINHIBITED, AS IS THE U.S. GOVERNMENT, BY ANY FELT REQUIREMENT TO DEFER TO THE SENSIBILITIES OF HAILE SELASSIE-HAS BEEN MORE ACTIVE IN FOCUSING PUBLIC ATTENTION THAN

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HAS THE AGED EMPEROR HIMSELF.

6. THOSE WHO HELP ARE FILLING A REAL NEED. THE BENEFICIARIES WOULD OTHERWISE BE IN EVEN MORE DESPERATE STRAITS. BUT THEY ARE BEING EX LOITED*IN A SENSE BY A REMISS GOVERNMENT. MORE SERIOUS, THEY ARE TAKING UP SOME OF THAT GOVERNMENT'S SLACK AND ALLOWING IT TO CONTINUE AVOIDING THE HARD CHOICES THAT WILL BE NECESSARY IF IT IS TO CARE CONSCIENTI USLY FO ITS OWN PEOPLE. THAT IS, OR COURSE, THE CLASSICAL DILEMMA OF AID OF ANY SORT: IT CAN ENHANCE DEPENDENCY AS WELL AS EASE DISTRESS. BUT IT NEEDS TO BE SQUARELY FACED IN RESPECT TO FOOD AID, BECAUSE THE WORLD MAY ALREADY BE IN A PERIOD WHEN FOOD AID IS THE MOST IMPORTANT KIND.

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Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
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